



TO THE  
HONORABLE  
THE  
COUNCIL  
For TRADE.

The humble Petition of manie thousands of  
poor Women, Spinners of Gold and Sil-  
ver-Thread, in and about the Citie of  
L O N D O N.

*Sheweth,*



IN all humilitie their Thankfulness to  
this honorable Council for their great  
patience and care to have our just grie-  
vances truly stated to you, for which  
favor wee shall ever bee bound to praie  
for your Honors; And that your Ho-  
nors may receive our Replie to the Pe-  
tition and Answer of the Wheel-men  
presented and read before us at your honorable Council the  
15 of Novemb. 1650. in answer to our Petition made a-  
gainst the Wheels, and their spinning Silver and Gold-  
Thread by them presented and read before this Council, the  
fixt of this instant Novemb. The Petition and Answer  
of the Wheel-men to our Petition follow in these words,  
*viz.*

*To the Honorable the Council for Trade :*

1. The humble Petition and Answer of the Twisters or Whippers of Gold and Silver, Freemen of the Citie of L O N D O N.

*Humbly sheweth,*

2. **T**hat in Answer to the Complaint of the Women Spinners of Gold and Silver against your Petitioners, and in obedience to your Order of the sixth of November Instant, your Petitioners humbly present unto this Honorable Council. That the Art of spinning Gold and Silver, with a Wheel was never brought in by anie Foreigner; but hath been used by Freemen of London, beyond the memorie of man, and your Petitioners and Predecessors served Apprentiships to the same Trade onely.

3. That the work of the Wheel is but little quicker, or sooner dispatcht then by the hand (accounting person for person) for to the working of one Wheel five or six poor small fatherles, and Parish Children are employed, who are able to do nothing els, and must otherwise beg or starve, whil'st everie person of the hand-Spinners can work singly, and a great number of them are Maids (that may bee otherwise employed) who take upon them to work, but never served anie Apprentiships to it, and divers of them use the same waie of Spinning by the Wheel, as your Petitioners do.

4. That the work made by the Wheel is nothing worse, but rather better then the other, and is more firm, Glossie, and serviceable, as may bee made appear by the Workmasters, and Weavers, who make the same into Lace, and is no more wasted in the Materials, nor consumed, nor loss of Bullion, then what is made by hand, beeing both spun alike upon Silk, and of like quantitie, and therefore no detriment, but rather advantage to the Common-wealth; for the most sorts of Commodities of the Women's works beeing in Bone-Lace,



Lace, which is now very little worn, is not, nor never was made by Wheels, and the deadness of Trade in general, and their imployment of late hath onely caused this their Complaint.

5. Now forasmuch as your Petitioners have served Apprentiships to the said Art of Spinning, or whipping with the Wheel, and have no other means, or waies of livelihood, for them, their wives, and Children, and if they should bee deprived of that, it would prove the utter Ruine of manie great Families, in, and about the Citie of London, besides poor distressed Children that are friendless.

Your Petitioners therefore (not desiring in the least to oppress, or wrong the Women-Spinners, or anie others, as is unjustly alleged) most humbly praie this Honorable Council to take into consideration, the necessitie of your Petitioner's Calling, as upon Examination may bee made appear, and to grant that your Petitioners may freely enjoie the Privilege of their Professions, as their Predecessors have don before them, without anie prohibition to the contrarie.

*And your Petitioners shall praie,*

Signed,

<i>Hugh Ball.</i>	<i>Ben: Hatton.</i>	<i>Richard Lillie.</i>
<i>Robert Philips.</i>	<i>Walter Hadow.</i>	<i>James Suicor.</i>
<i>Joseph Ward.</i>	<i>Henry Willing.</i>	<i>Jeremiah Gray.</i>
<i>Edward Deavnier.</i>	<i>Henrie Lee.</i>	

**T**O which Petition, in obedience to your Honor's Order of the 15th of November 1650. wee have made this replie; First, wee are by your Honors appointed to give our Answer, not with the number of above six persons, in

the behalf of us all, (which wee humbly conceiv your Honors did order out of your Charitie, seeing the Multitude that did attend you, that so manie thousand people, as depend on Spinning Gold and Silver-thread by the Spindle, and Chair might not lose their time and imploiment; but entrust the Management of our Petition in the behalf of us all, unto a certain number of us, and therefore wee have appointed som ancient Spinners, and added to them a competent number of others of our Profession, to take the care of our business, and most humblie to sollicite your Honors in our behalf, with this Caveat to them, and our most humble and prostrate desires to your Honorable and pious Considerations, to consider God hath most especially in his regard, the poor Widdow and the Fatherless, and the afflicted and poor indigent people, and though in humble obedience to your Honor's Order, wee will not appear at the daie appointed, beeing the 29th of November instant, in number above six persons, yet wee most humbly intreat you, to look upon those six, as representing the livelihood of above sixteen thousand persons, who have their onely subsistence by spinning of Gold and Silver-Thread, and all of them must perish and starv, if that the Wheels for Spinning of Gold and Silver-Thread bee not suppressed, and put down, they having been formerly upon our Complaint, to the late King's Commissioners for regulating of our Trade been put down, and suppressed both by the Lords of the Late King's Council, and by several Orders and Warrants of the late King's Commissioners seized, and taken away, and their Wheels and Engins broken, and for our Answer to the title of the Wheel-mens Petition, and so to the bodie of the Petition, as they are marked, wee saie to the first.

1. That whereas they saie in the Title of their Petition, that they are Twisters and Whippers of Gold and Silver, and Freemen of the Citie of *London*; Wee saie and can prove manie of them are French-men, and Forreigners, and the Wheels wee speak of brought in by a French-man, about twentie years ago, and that all the Wheel-men are  
of



Of other Trades; for there is a great deal of difference between Whipping of Silk, which is for the use of Embroaderie, and Hatband-makers, and Button-makers, which Trades wee meddle not with, nor laie no charge against the Wheel-men that make that work, and were manie of us men as wee are women, wee would go out and fight for our Countrie, and scorn ever to seek such an effeminate employment, and to bee Instrumental in the starving so manie thousands of poor women, and Fatherless Children, for the enriching of a few people, who for the most part keep these poor effeminate men, Wheel-Spinners short enough, and they are but made Apes to rost other men's Chestnuts, and held as effeminate poor spirited men, among all just, wise, and valiant men; And this is our Answer to the Title of the Wheel-men's Petition.

2. In Answer to the second Part of these Wheel-men's Petition, wee are confident that the Art of Spinning of Gold and Silver-Thread upon Wheels, was brought into this Nation, as afore wee have said, and all honest Wier-drawers, Silk-men and Refiners know, and can justifie it, that it was never known in *England* before. And our Answer to the Imbroiders is, Wee do not desire to hinder them in the least, in the Profession of their Trade; but daily praie to God for them, equally with our selvs, that God would bless their's and our Indevors in our Callings, to make us in our poor waie, profitable Instruments to the Common-wealth, and no waie burdenson, or chargeable to our Parishes, where wee live, beeing in number in manie severall out-Parishes above five hundred poor Spinners, which will for the greatest part bee put upon the charge of the Parishes where wee were born, or beg, or starv in the streets, if these Wheel-Spinners bee not suppressed; and whereas most untruly the Wheel-Spinners affirm, that they and their Predecessors have served Apprentiships to the said Trade of Wheel-Spinning, of Gold, and Silver-Thread, wee saie, and can prove, there is none of them but are of other Trades, and were never bound Apprentices, onely to the Art of Wheel-Spinning, but to other Arts as aforesaid.

3. To

2. To the third part of their Petition, wee give this answer, That there are not above thirty Wheels for spinning of Gold and Silver Threed in and about *London*, and the greatest part of these Wheels set up within less then two years, and all of them crept up since the Manufacture was under no regulation, and now that every man make's his work as hee list's; by which means the Manufacture is grown out of request, through the base and slight making of it by these Wheels, as appear's by the Certificates annexed. Now whereas these men would amuse your Honors with the numbers of poor small fatherless children which they emploie in this Wheel-spinning, wee do humbly desire your Honors that wee may tell you the number of these poor children they keep, and their waie of providing for them. Four boies, at the most, work at two pair of Wheels, which after this number they imploie about one hundred poor boies (which may bee all employed in more profitable waies) and that is neither constantly, but as their work com's in, and when they do work, these poor boies they have but three pence a daie the best of them, and finde themselves clothes, and meat, and drink, and lodging. Others of the inferior sort, som finde themselves diet and clothes and have but twelve pence a week when they work, and if they work half a daie, they have a pennie and finde themselves, and the best of them but three half pence for half a daie, and finde themselves; so that manie of these poor wretches look like famine, and are, poor creatures, below common beggers, and *Lazerillo de Tormes* his service was a mightie preferment to these poor creatures.

Wee further answer to their third Proposition, Their Engines may bee tolerated in a Countrey where there is more work, then hands can give a dispatch to, but where such great numbers of poor as wee are, they must bee employed or starv. Wee employ fiftie fatherless and distressed children for the Wheel-men's one childe that they imploy; wee could have fortie thousand hands to justifie this to bee true, and wee do not breed our apprentices as they do their Wheel-boies, to keep them upon such oppressive wages, and that onely while they have work.

May



May it pleas your Honors, we binde our servants apprentices for seven years, and some for 9, 10, 11, 12 years, and take them clear from the Parish at 8 years of age, manie of them, and give them meat and drink, and cloaths, and breed them in that orderly waie that manie of them have com to good preferment, and been profitable members of this Common-wealth; Now for these effeminate Wheel-men to set up a Engine that a man and a boie shall do the work of ten women, though by the Certificates here annexed of several Trades in this Manufacture, the work is base and slight.

And we humbly present to your Honors, King *James* and the Parliament in his time caused this Manufacture of Gold and Silver-Threed to bee made here onely in consideration of the multitude of poor Spinners, such as wee are, that had all a livelihood thereby.

Wee most humbly upon our knees laie our sad Condition and Cause at your Honor's feet, beseeching God so to direct your hearts, that as you are trusted by the Supreme Autoritie of the Nation to be Commissioners to regulate Trade; so you would bee instead of tender and compassionate Fathers to us, and Husbands to manie thousands of widows, and fatherless children, and other distressed people; which if you put not down the Wheels, we must most of us perish for want of bread.

Oh let it never be said, the poor in your time of Power and Trust, that are willing to work in their Callings they have ever been brought up in, shall bee caused to famish to enrich a few of these Wheel-Spinners Work-masters. And wee most humbly desire that honorable Gentleman Master *Asb*, one of the Commissioners, who hath and doth set so manie thousand poor people on work in the West by spinning and working of Cloth, to declare, that if he could finde an Engine that could spin with 500 men, that which is the labor of 5000, whether he would suffer four thousand and five hundred of his poor work-men to perish for his own private profit, or els be a means to suppress such an Engine? Wee most humbly applie our selvs to this Honorable

norable and Worthie Gentleman, becauf wee hear hee ſet's the moſt poor on work of any Gentleman in *England*; God increaſe the number of ſuch worthie men, and convert all thoſe that grinde and oppreſs the face of the poor, and ſtop their ears at the cries and groans of hundreds that periſh by theſe Wheels; which as they do the work with more expedition, ſo is it ſlighter and adulterated, as appear's by the Certificates annexed.

And whereas the Wheel-men complain that manie maids that may bee other waies imployed, and not bound apprentices to ſpinning Gold and Silver-Threed, by the Chair and Spindle have been taught that work, and might bee more profitably imployed to the ſervice of the Commonwealth; truly the greateſt part of us are of that opinion, but our Trade being under no Government, everie one doth what hee liſt; and if the Refiners and Wier-drawers would bee humble ſutors to your Honors for the Regulation of the Trade, and were Autoriſed by your Honors, theſe abuſes would quickly bee rectified, and wee would contribute our beſt aſſiſtance to procure a rule for all women-spinners to walk by, both for being admitted to work, or taking of apprentices: and whereas the Wheel-men ſaie, that ſome Spinners of Gold and Silver-Threed by the hand, do work and keep Wheels, wee could wiſh they might if any bee that do ſuch unworthie acts, bee for ever diſmiſſed the Trade, as unworthie *Judas*, that for their own private gain will bee inſtrumental in ſtarving ſo manie thouſand poor people, for the ſin is greater in one of us, then in any others, for wee know the miſerie and famiſhments that will com upon us if wee procure not from your Honors a Prohibition of theſe Wheels, and ſome of our condition have been already ſtarved to death by reaſon of theſe Wheels, and others have com to other untimely ends by reaſon of their extreme wants.

Wee moſt humbly preſent to your Honors for your preſident, a Declaration of the Lords in Star-Chamber upon the Certificate of the Lord Major and Aldermen of the Cite of *London*, 20 *Januarie* 1623. for the ſuppreſſion of an  
Engine



Engine for the making of Needles, which did deprive manie poor people of their means and livelihood, who formerly could get their livings by the Art of Needle-making, and that those that work with the said Engine do imploy much bad stuff, to the defrauding of all such as do buy the Needles made therewith: And these Wheels make the Gold and Silver Threed so bad and slight covered, that all men that wear it finde the fraud, and the Common-wealth the loss in the wast of the Bullion and Treasure by putting a thin plate on a great bodie of silk.

May it please your Honors, it will never bee well don as wee humbly conceiv, till it bee regulated by a Corporation and a sworn Assaie master, and Survaier to examine and trie by Assaie all the Manufacture; And the Corporation to consist and bee made of all the Refiners of Gold and Silver, and Gold Wier-drawers of the Citie of *London*, and they to have power to make such by Laws as is granted to other Companies in the like kinde, as shall bee agreeable to the Laws of this Nation.

There was also an unlawful Engine suppressed, which 7 was for the making of Tape, and in the late Kings time there was a Tool made for the flitting of Wood for Scab-berds of Swords, which Tool with one man and a boy will cut as much as ten men; and there is now a Tool at Saint *Katherins*, that by a Mill one man can make more Buckles for Spurs, Belts and Girdles, then 40 men can work with their hands, and the partie that owes the Engine will not work with it, becaus hee will not take away the livelihood of the poor; wee are humble sutor to your Honors, that Sir *John Wollastone* may bee desired by your Honors to cauf the Records of the Citie of *London* to bee searched, and what presidents they have for suppressing the Engines and Tools that take away the labor of the poor, and certifie them to your Honors.

4. The Bone-lace-weavers and Silk-men, and manie other that trade in this work, do justifie the contrarie to the fourth allegation of the Wheel-spinners, as by the Certificate annexed, that the Silver Threed is base and slightly  
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covered, which is made with the Wheels, to the great damage of the Wearers ; And whereas all Gold and Silver Threed ought to hold above five ounces of Silver to three ounces of Silk ; Now the Wheels cover the Silk so slightly, that much Silver Threed is made by the Wheel-men, that but three ounces of Silver, and manie times less cover's five ounces of Silk. And whereas they saie in their Fourth Allegation, they never spin but superfine on the Wheels, wee know & can prove, that they spin all sorts of Gold & Silver Threed, which wee make by the hand and spindle, and by their slight and base work have brought the Manufacture into disuse, whereas if all people were reduced to the due and orderly working, then would our Trade flourish, wee could if wee made all our work according to a certain standard, get a good Manufacture hereby, workmanship & labor between the Wier-drawer, Silver-spinner, & Bone-lace-maker, & manie other Trades that have a dependance thereon.

To the 5. and 6. wee answer as in the Third ; The Wheel-spinners have no apprentices bound to that Trade which is spinning of Gold and Silver Threed by the Wheels, they are all of other Trades ; The Wheel-spinners are people that mix and blend five or six Callings together, and by this means cheat the Common-wealth, and make adulterated wares to defraud the Common-wealth with ; if there were a Corporation of Gold Wier-drawers, the Refiners and Wier-drawers to have both equal interest in everie branch of the Trade, they would quickly suppress and hinder the frauds which are daily practised by these Wheel-men, and they beeing the onelie people that work all the base and slight stuff, to the great abuse and fraud of the Wearer, and scandal of the Manufacture ; and therefore wee are most humble suitors, that these Wheels may bee suppressed, and the Trade of refining of Gold and Silver Wier-drawers, and Hand-spinners with the spindle, and everie member put into such a Regulation, that for the future it shal not be in the power of any person working & selling this Manufacture to deceiv the Common-wealth, & to shew the great willingness wee that are Gold & Silver-spin-



spinners have, that the Trade may bee rectified; Wee are most humble suitors to your Honors that these our humble Propositions may bee taken into your Honorable considerations.

1. That your Honors will grant a Corporation to the Refiners of Gold & Silver, and Wier-drawers, giving them equal power to regulate the Trade, and everie branch and member thereof that live upon the making of Gold and and Silver Threed or Wier, and in pursuance thereof that wee the Women-spinners may bee regulated, that such persons that shall not serv for the Trade, for the least seven years for the future, shall not be admitted to work in that Manufacture: And if any Spinner of Silver shall for monie teach anie person that is not their apprentice, and bound and entred into the Hall of Gold Wier-drawers, that such Spinners of Gold and Silver Threed, shall for the first offence be dismissed the Trade for three years, for the second offence for ever, and not to bee re-admitted again for anie monie. The like rules wee humbly desire for the workman and work-master of the Wier-drawers, that none shall bee admitted to the Trade of Gold and Silver Wier-drawing, but such as have served apprenticeships at the said Trade seven years, and bound, and their names entred at Gold Wier-drawer's Hall.

2. That the names and dwelling-places of all men and women admitted to make Gold and Silver Threed and Wier, bee entred into the Register of the Hall of Gold and Silver Wier-drawers; and that upon the change or remove of any of the aforesaid persons from their houses or lodgings, all the time of their working of any the Manufactures aforesaid, they shall give in a true Ticket to the Surveyor and Assay-master of this Manufacture of Gold and Silver Threed, of their abiding place, and the time when they removed their lodgings, the daie, and moneth, and year; and for their entring this, shall not paie any fees at all to the Surveyors Clerk: and if any person or persons admitted to the Corporation shall remove their lodging, and shall not com or send to Gold Wier-drawer's Hall, or unto the Surveyor and Assay-master, a true Ticket of their abroad,



within one week after their remove, that for every such offence the partie neglecting shall forfeit five shillings, one moiety to any person that shall discover it to the Master and Wardens of the Companie, the other moiety to the Assay-master and Surveyors Clerk. And if any person admitted to work as aforesaid, shall shift his or her lodging, or work either Gold or Silver Wier, or spin Gold or Silver Threed in corners for the space of one moneth, and not give an accompt of their abode, then every such offender shall bee dismissed the Trade for the space of one whole year; and if they bee People of Estates, the Master, Warden, and Assistants of Gold Wier-drawers, to have libertie to set any fine on them, besides their dismissing of their Trades, according to their discretion, not exceeding the summe of five pounds: and the Surveyor and Assay-master to see by his Officers the persons so dismissed to obey the Order of the Corporation of Gold Wier-drawers, and from time to time make the said Wardens and Assistants of the Companie acquainted what they have don.

By this means the Corporation and Surveyor of Gold and Silver Threed and Wier, will have such an accompt of all the Members of this Trade, that keeping diligent search, and knowing where all the Traders live, the Manufactures will bee brought to bee made all of good Silver, substantial, and for the good of the wearer; and the Surveyor will bee able to secure to the Common-wealth,

¶ That there shall bee no base and cours Gold and Silver Wier made in his Office but perfect good, and none under Sterling. And if any person can or shall prove that any Gold or Silver Wier for these Manufactures aforesaid is courser then Sterling, and that the same passed thorow the Assay-masters hands, and was sold for good, the Assay-master and Surveyor to pay the full damages to the partie

¶ griev'd; by which means the Common-wealth will bee warranted that no bad silver shall bee made. And if this rule bee not taken, or som order to the like effect, it will bee impossible to regulate this Trade, and to suppress the abuses in the making Gold and Silver Wier and Threed,

both



both by cours Silver, & base and slight stuff. If there bee not a Corporation of Gold Wier-drawers, & the Trade & numbers settled, and their certain abiding places known, and that none may bee admitted for the future to work in the Trade but such as shall serve seven years Apprentiship.

Wee humbly desire your Honors, That Master *Tho. Violet* who was formerly imployed in the Regulation of this Manufacture, and knoweth the waie of discovering all the frauds in this Manufacture, may have the place of surveying and searching for all cours and adulterating Silver in Threed or Wier, and from time to time to give the Master and Wardens, and Assistants of the Corporation aforesaid, an accompt of all such members of the Corporation that shall work cours Silver, to the scandal of the Manufacture and deceit of the Nation, and that the Corporation aforesaid may have power to levie such sums of monie on the workers of the Manufacture, as shall defraie the necessarie charges for carrying on the due Regulation of the Manufacture, to avoid all deceits for the future in everie branch of the Trade, which will bee verie much for the service of the Common-wealth, and for their paying all officers imployed for bringing the Trade into a Regulation.

And from time to time the Corporation aforesaid to have power to chuse their own Officers upon the death of any of them.

Besides, the great number of us your humble Petitioners aforesaid, there is manie thousands poor Bone-lace-makers that will attend this Honorable Committee to justifie that the Manufacture of Gold and Silver Threed is made far more serviceable by the Hand spinners, then the Wheels; manie of their hands are to the Certificate annexed, all which wee most humbly upon our knees laie at your Honors feet, and beseech you for Christ his sake to take the same into your merciful consideration, and to give ear to the cries, tears and groans of so manie thousand poor Widows, Orphans, and distressed people, that onely desire  
to

to work for bread; and that their livelihoods may not bee taken away by Wheels that spin Gold and Silver Threed, to the forcing of thousands to beg their bread; and as in dutie bound wee shall daily praie.



**W**EE whose Names are here underwritten, beeing Silkmen, Weavers, and other Traders in Gold and silver Threed, do certifie to this Honorable Council for Trade, and to all People whom it may concern, That the waie of spinning of Gold and Silver Threed by the Women Spinners with the Chair and Spindle, is far more serviceable, and better made by the women then by the Wheels, for the benefit and service of the Common-wealth: and the Wheels and Engines for spinning Gold and Silver Threed have greatly damnified the Women-spinners, whereby many hundreds of poor Spinsters, for want of inmployment, have, and will daily fall into great miserie and pover-tie, if there bee not som good order taken for the suppressing of the Wheels.

This Certificate is signed by the hands of many hundred Silkmen, Weavers, Goldsmiths, Imbroiderers, and Bone-lace-makers, and humbly presented to the Council of Trade,  
29 Novemb. 1650.



